



# UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

## *Southern District of New York*

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### **MANHATTAN U.S. ATTORNEY ANNOUNCES CHARGES AGAINST MICHIGAN MAN FOR ILLEGALLY STREAMING LIVE SPORTING EVENTS OVER THE INTERNET**

#### *16 Websites that Illegally Distributed Copyrighted Sporting Events Also Seized*

Preet Bharara, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and John Morton, the Director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE"), announced today charges against YONJO QUIROA for criminal copyright infringement related to his operation of websites that illegally streamed live sporting event telecasts and Pay-Per-View events over the Internet. In a related action, the Government seized 16 websites that illegally distributed copyrighted sporting events, including nine websites operated by QUIROA. The websites seized include: (1) firstrow.tv, (2) xonesports.tv, (3) firstrowsports.tv, (4) firstrowsports.net, (5) firstrowsports.com, (6) hq-streams.tv, (7) robplay.tv, (8) soccertvlive.net, (9) sports95.net, (10) sports95.com, (11) sports95.org, (12) sportswwe.net, (13) sportswwe.tv, (14) sportswwe.com, (15) youwwe.net, and (16) youwwe.com. QUIROA was arrested yesterday in Michigan.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara said: "Sports fans may be tempted by illegal streaming websites, but in the end, it is they who pay the price. These websites and their operators deprive sports leagues and networks of legitimate revenue, forcing spectators and viewers to bear the cost of this piracy down the line. Yonjo Quiroa's arrest and these 16 seizures underscore our commitment to stopping this virtual thievery."

ICE Director John Morton said: "This enforcement action by ICE's Homeland Security Investigations, in coordination with our partners at the IPR Center, sends a strong message to website operators who mistakenly believe it's worth the risk to take copyrighted programming and portray it as their own. Protecting legitimate business interests are a priority for our agency. We will continue to investigate illegal streaming of programming on the Internet in an effort to preserve legitimate and creative business interests and deter others from engaging in this online criminal activity."

The following allegations are based on the Complaint unsealed yesterday in Manhattan federal court, and the seizure warrant through which the website domain names were seized:

### *Background*

It is estimated that each year sports leagues and broadcasters lose millions of dollars from the illegal distribution of copyrighted, live sporting events over the Internet. Such piracy threatens the investment that broadcasters and digital media companies are willing to make to distribute live content; the leagues' ability to sell game tickets and secure local television and radio carriage; and the value of advertising revenue generated by broadcast, radio, and new media partners. Sports fans are also victims, as the costs expended by sports leagues in an effort to address on-line piracy are passed on to fans when they purchase tickets or subscribe to sports networks.

### *Arrest of Yonjo Quiroa*

In 2010 and 2011, QUIROA registered nine of the 16 seized domain names, and he operated the websites out of his home in Michigan until his arrest. QUIROA received profits of at least \$13,000 from online merchants who paid him, through Internet advertising brokers, to advertise on at least one of the linking sites that he operated.

### *Website Seizures*

The 16 websites seized provided access to illegal, pirated telecasts of sporting events of the National Football League ("NFL"), the National Basketball Association ("NBA"), the National Hockey League ("NHL"), World Wrestling Entertainment ("WWE"), and the TNA Impact Wrestling ("TNA") – all of which hold the copyrights to the televised broadcasts of their respective sporting events.

The seized sites were popular "linking" sites – a type of website that provides access, or links, to other websites that hosted pirated sporting and Pay-Per-View events. At such sites, users simply click on a link to begin the process of downloading or streaming an illegal broadcast of a sporting event to their own computer. These illegal broadcasts are from a third party website that is hosting the stream. Linking websites are popular because they allow users to quickly browse content and locate illegal streams that would otherwise be more difficult to find.

As authorized by the warrant, all visitors to these websites are being redirected to a banner that advises them that the domain name has been seized by Order of the Court, in connection with criminal copyright violations. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York will seek to have the domain names for the seized websites forfeited.

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QUIROA, 28, of Comstock Park, Michigan, is charged with one count of criminal infringement of a copyright.

Mr. Bharara praised the work of ICE HSI. He added that the investigation is continuing.

The charges and allegations contained in the Complaint are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

This case is being handled by the Office's Complex Frauds Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrea Surratt is in charge of the prosecution.

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